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Monday, 29 November 1993 at 3 p.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 35

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/48/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/607-S/26769)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on agenda item 35 should be closed today at 4 p.m.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names as soon as possible.

I now call on the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. CISSE (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People *(interpretation from French)*: It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to address the General Assembly once again on this most important agenda item, entitled "Question of Palestine".

I should like to take this opportunity to express the Committee's most sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to the presidency of the Assembly, and our complete confidence that your knowledge of this difficult issue and your diplomatic skills will successfully guide our deliberations in the days to come.

We are living in extraordinary times that offer a challenge to our imagination and wisdom: the challenge of comprehending the multidimensional changes that are taking place, and of choosing the best course in the interests of peace. The recent, unprecedented developments in the Middle East peace process - which culminated in the signing, in Washington on 13 September 1993, of the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization - have opened a new chapter in the long history of the question of Palestine. The handshake between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and Chairman Yasser Arafat was a powerful image for a powerful moment; it showed that bitter enemies can make peace, once they recognize that conflicts, however deep-seated, cannot be resolved through the force of arms, and once there is the political will to negotiate a settlement, however difficult and painful that process may be.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People supports these developments, which it welcomes as a step of great importance towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East and towards realizing the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people. The

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Committee joins the countless other voices that have been raised in the international community in praise of the courage and political wisdom of the parties to this historic agreement, and strongly urges those parties to continue their efforts so as to ensure that the process that has now been initiated leads to a definitive peace in the region, for the greatest good of all the peoples concerned.

For many years now, our Committee, which is the principal United Nations organ concerned with the question of Palestine, has constantly called for a comprehensive settlement of the conflict on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions and of the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination.

Through the Committee's programme of regional seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, the publications and studies of the Division for Palestinian Rights and the special information programme of the Department of Public Information, there has been a consistent policy not only of informing and educating public opinion about the various aspects of the question of Palestine, but also of encouraging dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis and of mobilizing the international community in support of a just peace.

The Committee is convinced that these efforts, together with those of Governments and of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations - indeed, of the international community as a whole - have laid the groundwork for the recent developments in the peace process, which has been made possible by the fundamental changes in the international political scene in the last few years and by the general trend towards settling conflicts by peaceful means.

Despite the renewed sense of hope engendered by the evolution in the peace process, however, we should not delude ourselves that the role of the international community and of the United Nations, and within it, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, is thereby accomplished, or that only questions of economic and technical assistance remain. To the contrary, it is generally recognized that the new developments are the beginning of a difficult transition process which has many pitfalls and which will necessitate the continued vigilance and support of the international community as a whole, and the United Nations in particular, if it is to succeed. Many sensitive aspects relating to the implementation of the Declaration, such as Israeli withdrawal, permanent status arrangements regarding Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders and other issues affecting the entire region and beyond remain to be negotiated.

As affirmed by the General Assembly most recently in resolution 47/64 A, the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question is resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy. The Committee stresses once again the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the Palestinian national institutions as well as in providing broad assistance to the Palestinian people in all areas where it is needed. In this regard, the Committee has welcomed the steps taken by the Secretary-General in developing a concerted United Nations response in support of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The Committee also welcomes the reaffirmation by donor countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations of continued support for the Palestinian people.

With regard to its own role in the period just ahead, the Committee believes that it can be particularly useful in terms of mobilizing international public opinion and action in support of the ongoing peace process and the Declaration of Principles; monitoring developments in order to promote the full implementation of the agreements reached; promoting intensified international assistance to the Palestinian people for reconstruction and nation-building; and encouraging consideration and debate, in a constructive spirit, of the major issues to be negotiated at a later stage with a view to promoting a final settlement based on international legitimacy and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Details about the Committee's proposed programme of work in pursuit of these objectives are contained in its report (A/48/35), which will be introduced shortly by the Rapporteur.

Taking into account the new climate that has been established and the direction that the Committee intends to take in the coming year, the Committee calls on the General Assembly to express once again its full support for the work of the Committee and that of the Division for Palestinian Rights as well as for the special programme of the Department of Public Information, in order to enable them to make the most effective possible contribution to the process under way. The Committee urges the countries that support its objectives without having participated so far in its work to consider joining it in order to make it an even more effective and broader instrument of the General Assembly in pursuing the common goal of a peace with justice in Palestine and in the Middle East region as a whole.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of Malta, in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee's report (A/48/35).

Mr. CASSAR (Malta), (Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People): It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur, to present to the General Assembly the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People covering its work during the past year (A/48/35).

In 1993, the Committee, under the able guidance of its Chairman, Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, carried out its mandate in conformity with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The report covers the developments in the region and the activities of the Committee in the year since the last report, and takes into account the new situation with regard to the peace process, which evolved while the Committee was ending its work for the year.

The Committee has welcomed the exchange of letters of mutual recognition between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the subsequent signing by the representatives of the two sides of the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", providing for initial steps towards Palestinian self-government, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, and a framework for negotiations leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)

Chapters II and III of the report are procedural and summarize the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information. They also give information on the organization of work of the Committee.

The main body of the report is in chapter IV, which gives an account of the action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in implementation of their respective mandates. The chapter contains a concise review of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory from the end of the last reporting period until August 1993. The information is based on factual reports which reached the Committee from a variety of sources, such as Governments, non-governmental organizations, individual experts and the media. The Committee expressed its concern at the continued human rights violations in the occupied territory and at the deteriorating economic situation. It noted the economic development programmes and projects undertaken by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and welcomed the readiness of the Secretary-General to offer the parties every assistance within the context of the agreement that has been reached, as well as the subsequent appointment of a high-level task force to focus on economic and social development. The Committee also welcomed the pledging conference on assistance to the Palestinian people and stressed the importance of an effective role by the United Nations in this regard.

As the General Assembly is aware, the Committee is mandated to report and make suggestions to the Assembly and the Security Council, on an ongoing basis, with regard to developments relating to the question of Palestine. In several letters, which have been issued as documents of the General Assembly and of the Security Council and which are listed in the report, the Chairman drew attention to serious and urgent events, and made recommendations for action by the United Nations, particularly with regard to ensuring the protection of Palestinians living under occupation and the observance of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The Committee, in cooperation with the Division for Palestinian Rights, organized regional seminars and non-governmental organizations symposiums in North America, Europe and Africa, as well as an international meeting of non-governmental organizations. The Committee was encouraged by the active participation in these activities of prominent political personalities, parliamentarians, policymakers and other experts, including Israelis and Palestinians, and of committed and knowledgeable representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Committee believes that these meetings make a positive contribution to peace efforts by providing a forum for a balanced and constructive discussion of the most important issues.

Finally, the report describes very briefly the many activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights in the field of research, monitoring and publications and action taken for the establishment of a computer-based information system on the question of Palestine. It also describes the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter V of the report covers the work of the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/64 C, including the publications and audio-visual activities of that Department as well as the journalists' encounters and the news mission to the area.

Chapter VI, the last chapter, contains the recommendations of the Committee. These

recommendations were drafted taking into account recent developments.

The Committee welcomes the recent agreements as an important step towards the attainment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and towards the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. It reaffirms once again the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects, and stresses the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building Palestinian institutions, as well as in providing broad assistance in all needed fields.

The Committee believes that it can make a valuable and positive contribution to the United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by mobilizing international opinion and action for its successful outcome and in support of the Palestinian people until a final settlement is achieved.

The Committee believes that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not participated thus far in its work would greatly enhance the contribution of the General Assembly to the efforts to promote peace at this important stage.

The Committee has identified the priority tasks that would require immediate and sustained attention in its programme of work for next year. These tasks include the promotion of support for the ongoing peace process and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements; intensified assistance to the Palestinian people; and encouragement of consideration of major issues in order to promote a final settlement based on international legitimacy.

The Committee considers that the collection, exchange and dissemination of accurate and timely information are of great importance during this period and values the role of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a focal point in this regard. The Committee also considers that non-governmental organizations have played a significant and constructive role over the years in solidarity with the Palestinian national struggle and in support of the work of the Committee. It attaches great importance to the contribution to be made by non-governmental organizations throughout the transitional period and will explore ways to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work and to enhance the effectiveness and impact of United Nations-sponsored meetings of non-governmental organizations.

The Committee also considers that the programme of regional seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations has provided a useful forum for a concrete and constructive analysis and debate, in particular thanks to the regular participation of Israelis and Palestinians, and has helped in educating public opinion and facilitating dialogue. The Committee intends to continue this programme in the light of the new situation and will seek to enhance further the usefulness of these meetings.

The Committee also considers that the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information has been useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East. The Committee believes that the work of the United Nations in this field will become even more important and should be supported by the General Assembly at its current session.

Finally, the Committee trusts that the Assembly will endorse its recommendations and support its work, as has happened every year since the Committee's establishment.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3237 (XXIX), of 22 November 1974, and resolution 43/177, of 15 December 1988, I now call on the head of the observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. KADDOUMI (Palestine) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session. I wish you great success in directing the work of the Assembly towards its desired objectives. In electing you, Sir, the Assembly has chosen an outstanding personality with vast experience in international affairs. We have very close relations of friendship and cooperation with your country, Guyana. Guyana was among the first countries to support the rights of our people to sovereignty and independence. On behalf of Palestine and the Palestine Liberation Organization, I reiterate my congratulations to you and express the hope that this session, under your able guidance, will achieve tangible progress in advancing the cause of international peace and security.

I should like also to extend our appreciation to Mr. Stoyan Ganev, President of the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session, for successfully presiding over that session. Permit me also to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Mr. Cissé, the Ambassador of the friendly country of Senegal.

Today, the General Assembly begins its consideration of the question of Palestine in conjunction with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was launched as an expression of the General Assembly's support for the struggle of our people and in acknowledgement of the United Nations abiding responsibility for the Palestine question until an effective solution to this question in all its aspects can be achieved. This responsibility has been with the United Nations since its inception, beginning with the General Assembly's resolution on the partition of Palestine in 1947 into two States, one Jewish and one Arab.

The Middle East peace process started in Madrid in 1991, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land-for-peace in addition to resolving all other central issues relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the core of which is the question of Palestine. The Palestine Liberation Organization agreed to Palestinian participation in spite of the unjust conditions of the process, and has worked hard to make it a success. However, the world has not seen any tangible progress in this process, and so a search was begun for ways and means to restore its momentum and dynamism. The world has witnessed a new and important development in the Middle East: namely, the signing by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, at an international ceremony in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

Under the terms of that Declaration, Israel will begin its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area on 13 December next and complete the withdrawal within four months from that date. This will be accompanied by the establishment of a Palestinian national authority in that area, the entry of Palestinian security and police forces to maintain law and order. It will be accompanied also by the early transfer of competence to the Palestinian bodies in the rest of the West Bank. After three months the Israeli army will withdraw from the cities, towns, villages and population centres in the rest of the West Bank and be redeployed to designated locations. Free and democratic general elections - in which all Palestinians in the occupied territory, including the population of Arab East Jerusalem, will take part - will be held under international supervision and without prejudice to the rights of those Palestinians displaced since 1967, the modalities of whose return will be worked out during the interim period. Subsequently, the Israeli military government will be withdrawn and its civil administration dismantled.

The Declaration of Principles left for a later stage negotiation on a number of fundamental issues of paramount importance, such as those of Al-Quds, Israeli settlements, refugees and boundaries. Those negotiations are to start as soon as possible, but no later than the beginning of the third year. In this regard, we emphasize that the solution of these issues and the form of the final settlement must be fully based on international legality, in particular on the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly - not only because those resolutions are just and conform to international law and the values of international principles and morality, but also because they constitute the pragmatic and practicable solution. Holy Jerusalem, Al-Quds, the capital, God willing, of our Palestinian state, is of central importance to our Palestinian people, to the Arab homeland as a whole and to all Muslims and Christians the world over. In this regard, the international community and the Security Council have a clear position that must be adhered to.

The international community and, in particular, the Security Council have a clear position also on the Israeli settlements; the Security Council, in resolution 465 (1980), declared those settlements to be illegal and a serious obstruction to achieving peace and called for them to be dismantled. The settlements will continue to be illegal regardless of any political developments.

As for the Palestinian refugees, they now number 2.8 million, that is to say roughly one half of our Palestinian people. One third of them continues to live in refugee camps in the occupied territory and in the neighbouring Arab countries. This question must be resolved in a manner that is consonant with international legality, specifically, with paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which affirmed the right of return and the right to compensation for those who may not wish to return. That resolution has been reaffirmed by the Assembly year after year. This is an inalienable individual right that must be distinguished from the right of every Palestinian to Palestinian citizenship and nationality. One should recall in this regard the important role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing assistance to our people. I call on UNRWA to continue providing such assistance to Palestine refugees wherever they are living.

We call on the General Assembly to affirm the principled stand of the international community on these fundamental issues with the same vigour with which it supports the Middle East peace process and its recent positive developments.

The foregoing concerns the elements of the ultimate solution. As for the more urgent matters, in my view, the issue of the human rights of the Palestinian people under occupation emerges as a fundamental issue.

The Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs in the Occupied Territories has made praiseworthy efforts in this regard. Along with many human rights organizations from all over the world, the Committee carefully and meticulously monitored the situation over the past year. Here, we must recall the principles of humanitarian international law, and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, the Human Rights Covenants and the Vienna Declaration on Human Rights. In this context, we emphasize that the protection of Palestinian human rights and the strict application of international human rights norms in this regard are matters of principle that are not subject to negotiation or to political vicissitudes. We call upon the international community to insist on that.

In this regard, we must refer to the gravity of the abominable acts perpetrated by armed Israeli settlers against our people. We emphasize that it is the responsibility of the Israeli authorities to put an end immediately to this dangerous phenomenon in order to safeguard the peace process. While negotiations continue between the two sides on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, we demand that Israel completely lift the siege it has imposed on Al-Quds, release all prisoners and detainees and allow the prompt return of all deportees.

We emphasize the necessity for strict adherence to the Declaration of Principles, and in particular to the beginning of Israeli withdrawal by 13 December 1993. This would be the first test of intentions and of the credibility of the political decision. To continue to work in earnest and to achieve tangible results on the ground will constitute important steps forward. At the same time, we emphasize that the goal has been and continues to be the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. To this end, material and tangible progress must also be achieved on the other tracks of Arab-Israeli negotiations. While we express satisfaction with the developments on the Jordanian-Israeli track, we emphasize the necessity for progress on the Syrian-Israeli track and the Lebanese-Israeli track. This is a prerequisite for the achievement of a final settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mention of the existence of all the elements required for the continuation of the process and its success necessarily leads us to speak of the economic support needed for rebuilding and reconstruction in the Palestinian territory. As you know, during the long years of its occupation, Israel has destroyed our national economy and its infrastructure. Thus, we need to exert a continuous national effort to rebuild our Palestinian society. In order for us to be able to do that, we need the support of the international community in reconstruction and rebuilding. Here we must recall that the freedom, national independence and psychological stability of our people are prerequisites for the success of the development process and for the building of our democratic society.

We welcome the convening of the Conference in Support of Peace in the Middle East which was held in Washington, D.C. on 1 October 1993, and commend its results. We should like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to all the countries that pledged specific contributions during the coming phase. The Palestinian side, for its part, has taken several important steps in this regard. We have established the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction. We are in constant touch with the donor countries and with the international institutions concerned. In spite of all this, because of our thorough knowledge of the dimensions of the situation we are fully convinced that there is a dire need for greater economic and financial support and for more rapid implementation. We are fully confident that Arab brotherhood will remain, as it has always been, the basis of more Arab support for the Palestinian people under such exceptional circumstances.

We believe that the United Nations can play an important role in the implementation of assistance, given the presence of some of its agencies on the ground and their first-hand knowledge of the realities of the situation, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We call for the full involvement of the United Nations in this respect and expect more United Nations organizations and agencies to establish a presence in the Palestinian territory. We also expect close coordination between those agencies under the direct supervision of the United Nations Secretary-General or his representative. Hence I should like to extend our deep appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his unflagging support of the Palestinian people and the cause of peace in the Middle East. We also call for a more effective United Nations involvement in the peace process as a whole and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. This would be in keeping with the spirit of our time and the increasing United Nations role everywhere. It will also express our confidence in the Organization and in the international community.

The continuing tragic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is deeply disturbing to all humanity and runs counter to humanity's moral values. The tireless efforts of the international community are required to put an end to this tragedy and establish peace in those parts of the globe.

On the other hand, we watch with hope the positive developments which are taking place in South Africa towards the elimination of apartheid and racial discrimination and the establishment of a democratic system in their place. We congratulate the parties concerned on the achievements they have made so far, pay tribute to the South African people and their leader, Nelson Mandela, and wish them every success.

We look upon our future Palestinian experiment as an endeavour that will give practical expression to the principles of democracy, political pluralism, free elections, respect for human rights and the building of a modern society with a free and open economy. This endeavour is part and parcel of our vision for the Middle East as a whole.

All of us sincerely hope to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in a region that has witnessed a succession of wars, a great deal of bloodshed, a great deal of injustice and all sorts of persecution. So, let us work together for the building of a new Middle East that will be free from weapons of mass destruction and hegemony; a Middle East whose countries and peoples will enjoy security, stability and freedom; a Middle East that will be free from occupation by force of the territories of others; a Middle East of democratic, advanced and developed societies that respect human rights and the right of peoples to self-determination.

Mr. VILCHEZ (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The signing of the first, historic agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September this year in Washington D.C. reminded all of us that civilized, sincere and direct dialogue between the parties to a conflict is still the most humane, significant and effective way for mankind to work steadily, notwithstanding occasional apparent setbacks, towards resolving differences and deep antagonisms, however irreconcilable they may seem to be. Dialogue is God's gift to mankind, and demonstrating the courage to engage in it, even when certain forces oppose it, and knowing how to use it when the circumstances are right is a very serious and responsible act.

We therefore pay tribute to the Prime Minister of Israel, his Foreign Minister and the Chairman of the PLO and leader of the Palestinian people, and all Jews and Palestinians of goodwill who, with a correct sense of historic evolution, daring and courage, have solemnly undertaken with the international community and their own peoples to transform that historic region of the world, which Palestinians and Jews have shared for centuries, into one of peace, coexistence and cooperation between its peoples and Governments, a course that will inevitably lead them to peace, prosperity and sustained development.

To move from enmity and decades of tragic confrontation onto the path of cooperation and dialogue, with an eye to the future, is no easy task, nor is it free from danger, but it was vitally important to shoulder the historic responsibility to achieve peace. The process has its enemies, but they will understand the importance of the undertaking when it comes time to harvest the fruits of reconciliation.

Throughout mankind's history the beginning of dialogue between apparently irreconcilable enemies has often required the participation and encouragement of good friends. In this instance special recognition should go to the Norwegian Government, whose Foreign Minister, supported by his Government, had the vision and tact to promote, with the greatest possible discretion, the first and far-reaching direct meetings, against the perfect background afforded by his beautiful country.

The United States, Russia, Spain and many other countries of the international community also contributed greatly to the success of the agreements, which became a reality in Washington, under the aegis of President Clinton and in the presence of many eminent world personalities involved in the process. It is only right to say that the international community has for long been promoting and fostering the establishment of peace in the Middle East. There can be no doubt that ever since the General Assembly's adoption in 1947 of its historic resolution 181 (II), which called for the partition of Palestine into two States, one Arab and the other Jewish, the Assembly has been untiring in its efforts to ensure that, through negotiation and by peaceful means, the people of Palestine may exercise their right to self-determination and to create their own State.

For decades there have been intensive debates on this question in various forums. There has been incessant diplomatic activity, and the quest for peace has been a common objective. On this occasion we wish to emphasize the work of the members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, which for years led the way in supporting the endeavours of the Palestinian people by promoting countless initiatives. The Movement's activities, along with those of the United Nations, have afforded significant support for a solution of the Palestinian problem and the crisis in the Middle East.

In this long journey the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People also deserves special mention. My delegation has read with particular interest the Committee's report before us

for this debate, which indicates that, basing itself on the resolutions and principles of the United Nations, the Committee has worked unceasingly to promote a genuine process of peace and to achieve a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem.

Just as in their constant quest for peace, reconciliation and development the Israelis and Palestinians have relied on the invaluable support of friendly countries, we, too, with the assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, hope to form an active group of countries friendly to Nicaragua and determined to encourage realization of greater consensus among all Nicaraguans and to assist in making effective and more efficient the international cooperation that Nicaragua so sorely needs.

There is another important aspect of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement that we should highlight as a way of strengthening and guaranteeing the success of that agreement, which should, above all, benefit the region's inhabitants. I am referring to the ad hoc Committee on which the parties have agreed, which will be responsible for devising a wide-ranging network of technical and financial cooperation, joint construction of infrastructure and so on. Further, it is important and relevant to point out that we all know how much international assistance is needed, that a generous amount has been organized and secured, and that the size of the sums involved makes it perhaps the most important element of support for the success of the agreement, the establishment of a durable peace and the transformation of this region of the Middle East into a new focus of economic and social development and cooperation between the Jewish people and a large part of the Arab world.

We agree with Foreign Minister Kaddoumi, who sees the Palestinian experiment as a practical expression of the principles of democracy - political pluralism, free elections, respect for human rights and the construction of a modern society, with a free market economy - and as part of his vision for the Middle East as a whole.

We are certain that, despite the difficulties and obstacles in the way of dialogue and reconciliation, the parties will by common consent respect the aspects of the commitment they are called upon to fulfil, and that they will demonstrate goodwill in clarifying some of the complexities of the historic and irreversible Declaration of Principles signed in Washington. We hope that the remaining differences, including those that have recently emerged, will be progressively overcome and that the lengthy and difficult road ahead will be traversed successfully. In this connection, we reaffirm the Committee's important role in providing appropriate follow-up to the agreements, as well as the work the Secretary-General can do in helping to make a reality of the dream of a safer and prosperous life for all the inhabitants of the region.

The Israeli and Palestinian negotiators should continue their dialogue with a view to implementing the agreements without further delay and promoting confidence-building measures, so that headway may be made in the peace process. The General Assembly should also contribute to improving the atmosphere of the negotiations by appealing to all parties to renounce violence and to continue the talks in a candid, constructive and pragmatic manner, and by appealing to critics of the process to give peace a chance.

The excellent example of the agreements between Israel and Palestine deserves to be supported, followed and respected by all those who believe that dialogue and negotiation are vital to the strengthening of peace. Our people and Government are glad that Palestine - an ancient region rich in history - now has the prospect of a future of peace and progress, in which mutual mistrust, hatred, violence and poverty are consigned to the past for ever, and the Gaza Strip and Jericho achieve autonomy.

I reaffirm that Nicaraguans are struggling for the same ideals of peace, reconciliation, cooperation and development.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to make an announcement concerning agenda items 24, 151 and 33.

With regard to agenda item 24, "United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s", I am establishing a working group with a view to seeking a consensus text based on the draft resolution that has been issued as document A/48/L.24. I have requested the Permanent Representative of Norway to serve as Coordinator of this working group.

As regards agenda item 151, "United Nations initiative on opportunity and participation", I am also establishing a working group in order to negotiate a consensus text based on the draft resolution that has been circulated in document A/48/L.19. I have requested the Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to serve as Coordinator of this working group.

Finally, with regard to draft resolution A/48/L.28, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council, I wish to inform the Assembly that I still await a report on the draft resolution's budgetary implications before formally

submitting it to the Assembly for approval. I hope to do this by next Wednesday.

AGENDA ITEM 35 *(continued)*

QUESTION OF PALESTINE

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE (A/48/35)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/607)

Mr. SAMHAN (United Arab Emirates) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I have the pleasure, on behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, of extending thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Kéba Birane Cisse, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and to the other members of the Committee for their serious report, as well as for their sincere and unremitting efforts in following up political events and developments relating to the question of Palestine and its ramifications.

The current session's General Assembly debate on the question of Palestine follows the signing, by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements within the framework of the ongoing negotiations and deliberations between those two parties aimed at securing implementation of the agreement. All these developments represent a positive step towards the achievement of a peaceful, just, comprehensive and durable solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The radical changes that have taken place in the international arena over the past few years, as well as the substantive new elements in regional and international relations, have brought about a new international and regional climate. One of the results of that new climate has been the agreement that included recognition of the Palestinians as a people and of their legitimate political rights in line with international legality, international agreements and conventions and the norms of international law that stipulate the equality of all peoples and uphold all peoples' right to self-determination. Therefore, we view that agreement as a first step towards the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination.

Proceeding from this, the Council of Ministers of my country issued the following statement:

"The Government of the State of the United Arab Emirates fully supports all that the Palestinians accept within the framework of their cause. This stems from our belief that the Palestinian people is the party that is best placed to determine the steps which would save its interests and crown its struggle to return and to establish an independent Palestinian State.

"The State of the United Arab Emirates welcomes the agreement which has been reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel as a first step towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as of the principle of land for peace, the complete withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Arab territories, particularly Holy Al-Quds, the guaranteeing of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination, and the building of firm foundations for the security and stability of the Middle East.

"While renewing our affirmation of the need to continue peaceful efforts in accordance with the principles and agreed bases, we look forward to concrete developments and progress in the negotiations on all tracks with a view to advancing the peace process."

The Government of the United Arab Emirates has translated this stance into concrete reality by participating, at the highest level, in the international pledging Conference held in Washington at the beginning of last month for the purpose of helping the authorities of Palestinian autonomy to formulate and implement development programmes, as well as to build economic infrastructures in Gaza and Jericho. At the Conference, the Foreign Minister of my country pledged a sum of $25 million for these programmes.

Our participation and our pledge represented a restatement of our belief that there must be a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Middle East problem, at the core of which is the Palestinian question. This conviction had previously been demonstrated by our participation in the Madrid peace process and in multilateral negotiations.

In this connection, we should like to stress that all other tracks of negotiation at the bilateral level must be crowned with success and thereby lead to the complete withdrawal of Israel from all the occupied Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, Holy Al-Quds and southern Lebanon.

The road to the desired settlement is long, arduous and fraught with danger. We must all continue to deploy our peaceful efforts if the necessary momentum on all tracks of the comprehensive peace process is to be maintained. We believe that this process is a cornerstone of the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this context, we underscore the importance of the need for the United Nations and its specialized agencies, which have lived with the question of Palestine and the Middle East problem from the very beginning, to shoulder a special responsibility in the ongoing peace process until peace, security and stability are achieved in our region in a manner that would be conducive to the promotion of socio-economic development for all the region's States and peoples.

Mr. SHAMBOS (Cyprus): The world community finds itself at the crossroads between peaceful coexistence and development, on the one hand, and relapse into ethnic strife and political fragmentation, on the other. The end of the cold war, the emerging enhanced role of the United Nations and the prevailing political climate of conciliation create an ideal environment for an effective effort to achieve permanent solutions to long-standing problems. Whether mankind succeeds in seizing the present opportunity for peace and partnership depends as much on the United Nations as on individual Member States.

The case of Palestine is a striking example of opportunity grasped, and a decisive step made towards a comprehensive solution to this decades-old problem. The peace process in the Middle East has finally overcome the paralysis that was its main characteristic for decades, and, by means of a historic breakthrough, has surged towards a solution on the basis of an agreement that was signed in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993 between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel.

Cyprus, having historical bonds of friendship with the peoples of the region, could not but rejoice at these developments, which are in line with the international morality the United Nations advocates and the legality it upholds. The President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, expressing the feelings of our Government and people, said on 14 September 1993:

> "The reaching of a peace agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, after a !ong struggle which claimed the lives of thousands of people and caused human suffering and economic destruction, is a historic event which proves that, whenever there is goodwill on the part of the conflicting sides, solutions can be found even to issues for which resort to force seemed to be the only solution.
>
> "We believe the agreement is a landmark in the process for achieving an overall settlement to the Middle East problem and will put an end to the long confrontation in the region and bring peace.
>
> "We believe that there will be difficulties, but we are certain they will be faced in the same spirit in which the historic agreement has been achieved.
>
> "I express the profound satisfaction of the Cypriot people, the Government's and my own, at this breakthrough and I offer warmest congratulations to all those who had the vision and the great courage, determination and awareness of historic responsibility to make the peace agreement possible."

For years we have supported the idea that a peaceful final solution to the question of Palestine not only will vindicate the just struggle and the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, including aspiration to the right to self-determination, but will also guarantee the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to live in peace and harmony within internationally recognized and secure borders. Accordingly, we have joined the international community in maintaining the position of principle that for any solution to be just and viable it must be comprehensive and in conformity with the United Nations Charter.

Through our membership of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and our stance against foreign occupation, together with our conviction that United Nations resolutions must be implemented, we have encouraged every effort to promote peace. In this regard, my Government would be pleased to host Israeli-Palestinian working groups negotiating the agreement of 13 September 1993. Our readiness to offer Cyprus as a venue for such meetings has already been conveyed to the parties directly involved. We also believe that the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People should not only be maintained but enlarged to respond more equitably to the increase in the membership of the United Nations and, more important, to reflect the positive spirit created by the agreement.

It is our earnest hope that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement will have beneficial effects all over the world, including on the question of Cyprus, an international problem of invasion and occupation which has remained unresolved for almost two decades because of the failure to implement solemn Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. We support the agreement and we

urge the parties to maintain the impetus towards a solution to the problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Although certain events which have taken place recently have tended to poison the climate of optimism justifiably created by the agreement, the majority of people on both sides have demonstrated clearly their support for the agreement and their willingness to forge ahead towards peaceful coexistence, social and economic development, and cooperation.

We are concerned, however, by the Secretary-General's report that the socio-economic situation in the occupied areas is worsening. Extensive technical and other assistance by the United Nations is therefore necessary. We expect the active participation of the United Nations in all fields of the peace process, not just the economic aspects, during this sensitive transitional period of establishing Palestinian national authority. Moreover, goodwill measures are necessary to cement trust between the two peoples, contributing to the attainment of the goals of the agreement. The positive developments so far should be reflected also within the United Nations, the state of enmity and confrontation should be ended, and the resolutions customarily adopted should be reconsidered and re-examined.

Let me conclude by quoting from the message issued today by our President on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

> "The Palestinian people, in a spirit of resilience and determination, are fully committed today - as they have always been - to the struggle for their human rights, freedom, justice and national independence.
>
> "The historic agreement between the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, a truly remarkable achievement, constitutes the first step towards the long and difficult road to peace.
>
> "Cyprus praises the exemplary efforts that have been made by all sides in the struggle to secure lasting peace in the area. We urge all parties to continue their current search for a comprehensive solution, which is an indispensable condition for peace, security and prosperity throughout the Middle East".

Mr. WISNUMURTI (Indonesia): The question of Palestine is being considered by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session against the backdrop of the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Government of Israel. That agreement provides, *inter alia*, for a broad framework to achieve a permanent settlement of the issue that is at the core of the Middle East conflict, beginning with Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the town of Jericho and the withdrawal of Israel from those areas. We also welcome the repeal of the law against contacts with the PLO, the decision to negotiate directly with its representatives and the act of mutual recognition by the PLO and Israel. These positive developments taken together irrevocably recognize the long-sought national and political identity of the Palestinians and their right of their leaders to negotiate on behalf of their people.

It is pertinent to recall that for over a quarter century the occupying Power, by its steadfast refusal to observe the Fourth Geneva Convention, has, through an oppressive military regime, carried out an illegal policy of colonization and annexation, and massive violations of human rights, universally accepted norms of international law and international conventions. This has caused immense suffering and hardship for the Palestinian people and has had a devastating impact on the fabric and well-being of Palestinian society. In fact, living conditions have become appalling, with most physical infrastructure and public institutions either non-existent or near collapse. Of immediate importance therefore is the strict enforcement of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and the adoption of remedial measures to resolve the urgent socio-economic problems facing the Palestinians.

This plight of the people in the occupied territories was highlighted at the international donors' conference held at Washington, D.C., last October, which resulted in the establishment of a high-level United Nations task force to create a firm foundation for the social and economic needs of the Palestinian people. In this context, we attach particular importance to the improvement of existing infrastructures and to the building of new infrastructures for the attainment of the development objectives of the Palestinians. This calls for delinking the Palestinian economy from that of Israel, removing stringent controls over Palestinian economic activities and rescinding the regulations concerning the use of land and water resources by the indigenous inhabitants. Thus, the process of reconstruction should go forward in preparation for independence and statehood as an integrated approach to peace and development that will provide the essential wherewithal for building a strong, secure and prosperous State of Palestine.

We also recognize that the initial steps contained in the Declaration of Principles are an integral and non-prejudicial part of the entire peace process, which envisages a transitional period of five years. In that context, we fully endorse the long-standing demand by the

Palestinians that interim arrangements must include their right to exercise jurisdiction over all the occupied territories, including total control over their political and economic affairs. Furthermore, the scrupulous implementation of all the provisions of the Declaration of Principles will be of crucial importance. In this regard, the ongoing negotiations continue to face obstacles and difficulties, especially on the question of Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. Further aggravating the situation is an escalation of clashes and violence unleashed by Israeli forces and by armed settlers.

It is particularly regrettable that Israel has yet to show a positive attitude with respect to fully and faithfully implementing the Declaration; this reflects the uncertainties that exist in the peace process. Hence, there is an obvious need for a continuing United Nations role, especially in ensuring a just and comprehensive settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which constitute the essential foundation upon which to build a durable structure for peace and justice in the Middle East. We also envisage an equally important role for the Organization in the economic and social development of the Palestinian people. Close and effective coordination within the United Nations system would be equally essential in ensuring the optimum utilization of such assistance.

Indonesia and other non-aligned countries have consistently maintained their position, and have called for the attainment of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians as an essential prerequisite for peace and security in the Middle East. In this context, the communiqué issued at the conclusion of the meeting of Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the Non-Aligned Movement, held last October, reaffirmed their resolve to support the Palestinian people in their quest for the achievement of their inalienable rights.

My delegation hails the heroic sacrifices made by the Palestinians in their long and arduous struggle for the attainment of those rights and reaffirms its solemn commitment to the achievement of an independent Palestinian State. We commend the Palestinians for the contributions they have made in significantly advancing the peace process. However, the momentum generated by the Palestinian-Israeli agreement should be reinforced by sustained negotiations on other outstanding issues, including the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, equity for the refugees, the dismantlement of settlements and the delineation of borders, as well as other questions of common concern. We realize too that the task ahead is by no means an easy one. Yet the need to translate the agreement on self-rule into real peace and to build and sustain a new era of security, stability and cooperation is now more urgent than ever.

We now have an unprecedented opportunity to achieve a peaceful solution to the question of Palestine, a question which has for so long been a preoccupation of the international community. If this core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be resolved, we can then look forward with hope and optimism to a safe and secure Middle East.

Mr. NOTERDAEME (Belgium) *(interpretation from French)*: On 30 October 1991, the Twelve affirmed, at the opening of the Madrid Conference, that the objective of peace in the Middle East was no longer a mirage but rather a reality that was within reach. At that time they stressed that it was absolutely essential that the serious commitment shown by the parties in embarking on the Madrid process should be preserved and that growing mutual confidence should flow from it.

Two years after that historic day - which in itself marked a break with the confrontational mentality of the past - the perseverance and flexibility shown by the Israeli and Palestinian leaders have made it possible to take the decisive step towards peace with the signing, in Washington on 13 September last, of the mutual agreement. Peace, which until then had been just a promise and a challenge, was thus confirmed as the clear and unequivocal choice of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

On the occasion of the signing of that agreement, the European Union paid a tribute to the farsightedness and the courage of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders who, by signing, had helped insert a radical turning-point into the Middle East peace process and who, by so doing, had raised great hopes not only amongst the inhabitants of the occupied territories and Palestinian refugees, but also amongst the peoples of the whole region. For the European Union, this expectation must not be disappointed, after so many difficult years; we are profoundly convinced that the success of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement will have crucial consequences for the progress of peace throughout the Middle East.

The European Union welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian agreement of 13 September all the more because it is marks a beginning for the implementation of principles for which we have stood for many years. In accordance with our well-known positions, including support for resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), we are determined to play a role that is at once active, constructive and balanced in pursuing the peace process and in participating in the

international arrangements that will flow from the recent agreement.

The current momentum resulting from the Israeli-Palestinian agreement must be kept up at all costs so as to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the conflict and the Palestinian question.

The European Union considers it essential that the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement should be supported both politically and economically. Together with the international donor community, we have made major financial undertakings with a view to providing immediate assistance exactly where the needs are greatest, and we are seriously considering making a substantial effort in terms of grants and medium-term loans for the occupied territories.

As part of the multilateral aspect of the peace process, we are determined to take part in coordinating and promoting the aid that has been agreed by the various donors so that it can be disbursed flexibly and effectively.

Under our common foreign and security policy, we are also considering joint action to ensure that the peace process in the Middle East goes hand in hand with the mobilization of the political, economic and financial means that the European Union can deploy in support of a comprehensive peace plan.

In establishing an inter-agency team to study a supplementary assistance effort for the occupied territories even before the Israeli-Palestinian agreement was officially signed, the Secretary-General of our Organization was reacting to the urgent economic and social needs of the Palestinian people, to which the international community must make an adequate response. We have noted the firm intention of the Secretary-General to do everything within his power to contribute to the peace efforts and to place the Organization's services at the disposal of parties that request them.

The three areas of human rights, economic development and the peace efforts, in our view, overlap closely, and will without a doubt continue in future to be as much a subject of United Nations attention as they were in the past.

We have noted the positive steps that have been taken in the wake of the 13 September agreement, such as the repatriation of deportees and the release of prisoners. Confidence-building measures of this kind are in our view essential if the present, unprecedented atmosphere in the peace process is to thrive. This is why the European Union urges the parties to persevere in this direction. We should also like to reiterate our condemnation of violence from whatever source, and we hope that its aftermath will now become part of the past.

The withdrawal and redeployment of the Israeli army provided for in the Israeli-Palestinian agreement, together with the establishment of a Palestinian police force and the transfer of powers from the Israeli military government and its civil authorities to designated Palestinians, should transform the lives of the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza within a few months from now, while they await the forthcoming inauguration of an autonomous interim Palestinian authority.

All the means at our disposal must be deployed in order to ensure that the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement is a success. The European Union believes that it is up to the parties to determine the conditions for a settlement which, in order to be effective, must be freely negotiated and must be accepted by common accord. It is now up to the Palestinians and the Israelis to give concrete expression to their joint commitment to peaceful coexistence and to respect for each other's dignity and security.

Mr. LAMAMRA (Algeria) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: I should like to convey, at the outset, our thanks to the Secretary-General and to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the two reports they have presented. Their two reports provide useful information on the recent developments of the Palestinian question and concerning the prospects for the future of a crisis whose history has continued to be closely linked with that of the United Nations since its inception.

Our discussions this year may perhaps be slightly different from those of past years for, over the past few months, the Middle East region has been giving grounds for hope, in the shape of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for the occupied Arab territories. Proceeding from its belief in the need to respect the decisions of the Palestinian people, Algeria has always encouraged every initiative that promised to ensure the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate rights and lead to the establishment of a comprehensive just peace in the Middle East. That is why we now hope that this first step will be the beginning of real change in the history of the region's peoples.

Algeria, while it welcomes this positive development, views it as a first step towards an equitable, lasting and comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian question and to the Middle East crisis, on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the land-for-peace principle.

Proceeding from this, we believe there is a need to continue to work for the translation of the provisions of the Declaration of Principles into concrete reality speedily and with a sincere political will so that we may seize the opportunity to achieve peace, consolidate and expand it to embrace all the other tracks.

The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements is the beginning of a difficult process of change. It makes it necessary for the entire international community and, especially, for the United Nations to demonstrate real vigilance and to strive to provide effective support with a view to strengthening that process in order to ensure that it may lead to enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable national rights, including its right to self-determination in complete freedom under propitious economic and social conditions. Algeria strongly believes that the United Nations bears an abiding special responsibility *vis-à-vis* the Palestinian question and that that responsibility will endure until such time as a just settlement is achieved in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's statement of last September to the effect that the Organization is ready to provide any and all assistance to the parties concerned within the framework of the agreement, with the aim of establishing peace in the Middle East in accordance with United Nations resolutions. We also welcome the creation of a high-level inter-agency working group to focus on the economic and social development of the Palestinian territories. We should also like to express our gratification at the convening of the pledging conference in Washington, and should like to underscore the need for the United Nations to play an effective role in this respect. Algeria, which took part in the Washington conference, cannot but stress the crucial importance for the success of the peace process of bringing about economic and social recovery in the returned territories.

The importance of the peace process that began in Madrid lies in the fact that it is an evolving process, and in its potential for achieving progress towards peace. Long-held views are changing gradually and the gap between the parties is narrowing, albeit a bit too slowly at times. It is extremely important that the results of the process should rise to the level of the desired comprehensiveness and that they should generate the necessary political dynamism on all tracks so that the edifice of peace may be built upon all the underpinnings that are available in the area, without exception.

Here we wish to stress the need for the actual implementation of the provisions of the agreements contained in the Declaration of Principles in good faith, since the proper implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement will be the test of Israel's genuine political will and the test of its willingness to make peace with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and with the Arab States whose territories are still under occupation.

Here we must also address the question of the Holy City of Al-Quds, which, according to the provisions of the numerous resolutions adopted by the Security Council over the years, is a crucial one. While it has been agreed to negotiate the status of the Holy City at a later stage, it is absolutely necessary that the provisions of international legality continued in Security Council resolutions should be given total ascendancy over any unilateral measures on the part of Israel with regard to Al-Quds and should be given the upper hand throughout the negotiating process and, indeed, throughout the period of transition, so that the psychological and political climate needed for progress towards peace may be created.

In this period of transition from confrontation to detente and peace in the Middle East, which is a difficult and delicate one, by any standard, the United Nations is required, more than ever before, to pull its full weight and to bring it to bear on the course of events. It must uphold those principles that will ensure the durability, fairness and comprehensiveness of the results of the negotiations that proceeded from the Madrid conference.

Consequently, our discussion today of the Palestinian question, which may be tinged with a measure of optimism, must adhere tenaciously to the principal and integral frames of reference embodied in the concept of inalienable national rights by the Palestinian and other Arab peoples, as defined by the United Nations and should take into account the contribution made in the course of their struggle and their sacrifices, towards the highlighting of the indispensable requirements of peace.

Mr. ELARABY (Egypt) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The delegation of Egypt is pleased that the General Assembly is considering the question of Palestine at this time, when Egypt is hosting the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on implementing the agreed Declaration of Principles signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in Washington on 13 September 1993. This great achievement was the result of strenuous and continuous efforts in which all the parties concerned had participated since the start of the Madrid peace conference on the Middle East in 1991. We hope that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement will be the first step towards the full implementation of the frames of reference agreed

upon in Madrid, namely the principal content of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which is the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East that includes the withdrawal of Israel from the Arab territories it occupied in 1967 and the exercise by the Palestinians of its inalienable national rights.

Our optimism is founded on a solid basis, namely the agreement in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements wherein both parties agreed on the principle of Israel's withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian territories in that Israel's initial withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and from Jericho on the West Bank will be the first step towards its complete withdrawal from all the territories it occupied in 1967. The agreement also provides for a transitional period for building confidence between the two parties that would pave the way towards final negotiations on such fundamental issues as Al-Quds and the settlements. We hope that both parties will succeed in achieving the desired objectives of that transitional period in a manner that will lead to the success of the final settlement negotiations. We also hope that agreement will be reached expeditiously on all the transitional arrangements so that there will not remain a single Palestinian under Israeli occupation.

Mr. Kabir (Bangladesh), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We are certain that the Palestinian people will demonstrate to the whole world its sincere desire for and full commitment to peace as well as its commitment to the undertakings of its national leadership. We hope that Israel will respect its obligations as an occupying Power during the transitional period and that it will refrain from introducing any alterations on the nature of the occupied territories including Jerusalem that would affect the outcome of the final negotiations.

The historic agreement between the representatives of the Palestinian people and Israel stipulates that:

> "it is time to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognize their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security, and achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through the agreed political process". (*S/26560, annex, p. 4*)

We believe that both parties need every possible international support in order to make possible the achievement of progress towards the implementation of this agreement. Egypt, which is doing its utmost to achieve this goal, calls upon the international community to discharge its responsibilities in this respect, especially that the Palestinian people is in dire need of the support of the international community, now perhaps more than ever, as it takes its first steps on the road to peace. At this juncture the Palestinian people needs every possible assistance in the political, economic and other fields.

Here we should like to commend the results of the international donors' conference held in Washington on 1 October 1993 in order to assist the Palestinian people in building its social and economic structures and institutions.

The delegation of Egypt wishes to pay tribute to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the positive role it has played under the able chairmanship of Ambassador Cissé, Permanent Representative of Senegal to the United Nations, in informing world public opinion concerning the question of Palestine and in raising awareness of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights. We think that the role of the Committee will acquire added significance in the near future, in view of the recent developments in the region. The Committee can channel its activities towards supporting the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli accord and it can initiate programmes aimed at increasing international awareness of the needs of the Palestinian people in the new phase.

Proceeding from this, we hope that the Committee will receive extensive international support from all Member States of the United Nations. We hope that all, and in particular, the donor countries will consider the possibility of widening the membership of the Committee so that all parties and countries concerned may be able to participate therein and to contribute to assisting the Palestinian people in taking further steps towards peace.

My delegation also wishes to commend the effective and prompt response of all the United Nations organs in supporting the implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli agreement, particularly the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing a high-level task force among all the relevant United Nations organs with the aim of determining what the Organization can do in this respect. This has led to valuable and positive participation by the United Nations in the Washington donors' conference.

Since the peace conference held in Madrid was based on the implementation of two United Nations resolutions, it is natural for all of us to expect the United Nations to play a very important role in supporting the implementation of this agreement, in view of the great importance the United Nations has continued to attach to the question of the Middle East and the question of Palestine in particular for more than 45 years now. The

agreement between the parties concerned is bound to facilitate the performance by the United Nations of a positive role in all areas related to promoting the implementation of the agreement between all those parties. That role may well go beyond the provision of technical or economic assistance and may well embrace the areas of confidence-building measures and peace-keeping.

We hope that progress will be achieved in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on the implementation of the stages of the agreement within the agreed time-frame, towards the initiation of negotiations on the final settlement. The success of peace efforts in the Middle East will depend, in large part, on the triumph of those who champion peace, both in Israel and in all countries of the world, over those who call for confrontation and intransigence. It is only then that the peoples of the region will be able to see a clear peace dividend that would justify the sacrifices which should be made as a price for peace.

The multilateral talks offer a highly significant experiment regarding the peace dividends that could accrue for all the parties concerned including the Palestinian people whose representatives are actively taking part in all rounds of those talks. In addition to the efforts that could be deployed by the various working groups of multilateral negotiations towards implementing the Palestinian-Israeli accord within the plans of regional cooperation for development, the working group on Palestinian refugees is especially qualified to play a positive role in facilitating the achievement of agreement on a political settlement to this problem in the context of the final settlement negotiations in a manner that would guarantee the just and legitimate rights of the Palestinian people outside the occupied territories, in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

Since Egypt started the peace experiment, we continued to hope that peace would be achieved between the Palestinians and other Arab peoples, on the one hand, and Israel on the other hand. From this rostrum and in all other international forums we have called upon all parties to make the necessary sacrifices in order to reach that objective, no matter how costly the sacrifices might be. We feel today that we are taking a large step towards the achievement of that desired objective and hope that similar steps will follow on all the negotiating tracks. We are confident that if the determination is there to achieve peace between all the parties concerned and if clear signs of peace become apparent, public opinion in all the countries of the region and in the international community at large will support that option and show readiness to promote the striving for peace with every possible means.

Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan) (*interpretation from French*): For 46 years, the Assembly has been discussing the question of the Middle East. That period makes up a large part of the twentieth century, and thus of the life of this Organization and of our own lives and careers and those of many others. I remember that I myself, 26 years ago in the Assembly and on this very spot, voiced my doubts and the doubts of the delegation of Afghanistan as to the promises of Mr. Abba Eban, then the senior representative from Israel, who assured the Assembly that the rights of all religions would be respected in Jerusalem, which at that point had just been occupied. But those promises were not respected - or only very minimally - by the occupier, Israel, and so here we are again.

It has just been said that a new chapter in the Middle East question - the question of Palestine - has been opened. Afghanistan, a member of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, recognizes that the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-government Arrangements of 13 September 1993, is a step - but only a first step - towards a durable and just solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict and of the fundamental aspect of that conflict, namely, the question of Palestine. The Declaration of 13 September must be governed by the United Nations Charter and by the resolutions adopted by the Organization, and it must be implemented so as to allow for the full realization and full exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to return, to independence and to national sovereignty - in other words, to guarantee the inalienable rights of the Arab Palestinian people to the creation of an independent State on their national homeland, including Al Quds Al Sharif - Holy Jerusalem.

I go into these details because Afghanistan insists first and foremost on the absolute need for Israel to withdraw from all territories occupied since 1967, including Al Quds Al Sharif and the territories occupied in other Arab countries. Afghanistan firmly believes in the national rights of the Palestinian people, and first of all to their right to self-determination, which includes their right to an independent Palestinian State.

Afghanistan obviously recognizes the right of all the countries of the region, including the State of Palestine that is soon, we hope, to be established, and those enumerated in General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, to security within secure and internationally recognized borders. Of course, Afghanistan, along with many other countries here, supports the need to dismantle and permanently evacuate the Israeli settlements established in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, settlements that have been established contrary to all norms of international law and the provisions of the

Geneva Conventions and which flout legality. We all know that an occupier that seeks peace will withdraw its forces and not continue to maintain settlements. Afghanistan has repeatedly pointed to the need to find a solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948 and subsequent resolutions.

Afghanistan firmly supports the human rights - civil, political, cultural and economic - of the Palestinians in the occupied territories on the basis of the two human rights Covenants of the United Nations. We demand that the Fourth Geneva Convention be applied to them and to their territories. We demand that the state of siege be lifted throughout the occupied territories, including Arab Jerusalem; we demand the release of all Palestinian political prisoners and the return of those Palestinians who have been expelled.

We hold that there must be free access to the Holy Places for the faithful of all Abrahamic religions. The world Islamic community - one fifth of all mankind - venerates the Holy Places of Islam in the City of Al Quds Al Sharif, Jerusalem the Holy and Noble, the first direction - the kiblah - towards which Muslims turn at prayer, a stage of the night journeys of the Prophet, as recounted in the Holy Koran. Thus, the question is in no way restricted to the negotiations between Israel and Palestine, for Arab Jerusalem is the centre of the most fervent interest of the entire Islamic world.

Mr. RAZALI (Malaysia): Today marks the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. My delegation would like to commit itself again to that solidarity and to say that we stand together with our Palestinian brothers in the days ahead, whether they are days of opportunity or days of challenge.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 13 September has brought out fresh hopes and increased expectations of finding a comprehensive and durable solution to the question of Palestine, an item that has been on the United Nations agenda for more than 45 years. In the political topography of the Middle East, one of unending violence and bitter hatred, the question of Palestine, arguably the most intractable of all issues, the signing of the Declaration of Principles - like the pact on a united future between blacks and whites in South Africa - further broadens the horizons of possibilities in this post-cold-war period of world history.

Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, in his address to the Assembly on 1 October this year, stated:

> "The recent signing of the peace agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israelis and that between blacks and whites in South Africa must be regarded as the biggest achievements of the post-cold-war period." *(Official records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 13th meeting, p. 18)*

He added:

> "Admittedly, there is still a great deal to be negotiated before justice can be rendered to all sides and before true peace becomes permanent." *(Ibid.)*

The courage of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin in assuming the leadership to bring about the forging of such a historic decision must command our total support. My delegation would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all leaders and Governments for successfully working towards the September PLO-Israeli agreement. Norway, with its quiet diplomacy, has played a pivotal role in creating history.

Malaysia has consistently and unequivocally supported the Palestinian cause. An important pillar of Malaysia's foreign policy has been our support for the Middle East peace process. Over the years we have called on all parties concerned to demonstrate the necessary political will and good faith to resolve the conflict. In 1989 and 1990, when Malaysia was a member of the Security Council, we actively pursued and promoted the rights of the Palestinians in all their aspects, and we were critical of the political inertia on that issue within the Council.

The latest developments should - must - promote forward movement in the long and arduous search for a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the conflict. This agreement must help to build the mutual confidence that would ultimately facilitate solution of the issue within the framework of the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions - in particular, resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). These resolutions, in fact, provide for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to a homeland, and for the security of all States in the region, including Israel. To the Palestinians and the Israelis, the agreement must mean the speedy achievement, after a time, of a climate of reason in which they will want to work together for their mutual betterment and for the future of the region.

While welcoming the agreement, my delegation notes that this initiative was undertaken outside the framework of the United Nations. It is a fact that, in respect of the Palestine issue, the United Nations - more specifically, the Security Council - has contributed little. However, my

delegation does not consider that the United Nations is irrelevant to the peace process. Indeed, we see a direct and immediate role for the United Nations in the implementation of this historic agreement. We can identify various roles and functions that the Organization could undertake, through the Security Council, to alleviate the long-neglected welfare and needs of the Palestinians.

Also, for Palestine as well as for Israel, it is time to get involved again in the multifaceted activities of the United Nations, especially those connected with new, special issues - such as the environment and sustainable development, human-resource development and social and economic dimensions of human security, as well as human rights - on which international and regional cooperation is necessary. Successful implementation of the agreement must involve the international community in the development and reconstruction that are so necessary if peace and stability are to be come to this troubled part of our world. We recognize that the Secretary-General has initiated specific moves to have the United Nations directly involved. These are reflected in the Organization's participation in the Conference in support of the Middle East peace process that was held in Washington on 1 October 1993.

My delegation would like to congratulate the Governments and leaders of the United States and of the Russian Federation for organizing the Washington Conference. The fact that it was held within weeks of the signing of the agreement demonstrates the seriousness of all the parties concerned and their commitment to building on this initial breakthrough and to continuing the struggle to bring about a new era of sustained peace, stability and prosperity in the region - beginning with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In no way should there be a relapse into confrontation and incessant conflict.

Coming from South-East Asia - a region that has chosen in recent years to de-emphasize the politics and practice of conflict and to highlight economic growth and potential - we see the Middle East as a region that will be capable of growth and development if peace and stability are allowed to prevail. In this connection, Malaysia recognizes that bilateral assistance and multilateral assistance for the development and reconstruction of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are both crucial to the attainment of Palestinian self-rule and to subsequent progress in the peace process, as well as to the future of Palestine - indeed, to the future of the whole Middle East region.

As a demonstration of its support, Malaysia has joined the international community by pledging a modest financial contribution of $5 million to assist the Palestine National Council in its new task of reconstruction and development in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. We have also declared our intention to provide assistance, on a priority basis, in the fields of human-resource development and institution-building within the framework of the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programmme.

Change, as symbolized by the agreement, poses both opportunities and challenges to the leadership in the region and to the rest of the international community. The international community in general recognizes the positive geostrategic influence, but the leaders on the ground have to address opposition to the agreement as well. Already the euphoria over the agreement has been marred by violence and destruction. The search for peace, stability and development must, however, be allowed to take root. In this regard, illegal settlements must go if peace is to be given a chance to prevail. The international community should provide all necessary support for the cause of peace.

We hope that implementation of the PLO-Israel agreement can proceed unhindered and as planned. I refer in particular to the withdrawal of Israel from the West Bank and Jericho and to the election, through a free ballot, of the transitional Council. There is also an urgent need to draw up a plan for the repatriation of some 700,000 Palestinians expelled since 1967. We commend neighbouring Arab countries for jointly shouldering the burden of providing temporary shelter for those displaced Palestinians. The active participation of the United Nations in the implementation of this repatriation plan is also of the utmost importance.

The role of the United Nations in finding a comprehensive, just and durable solution to the question of Palestine has acquired greater significance in the post-peace-agreement era. Just as it played a determined role in the granting of independence to Namibia, the United Nations must remain permanently seized of the question of Palestine until that question is resolved and the Palestinians have their own homeland.

The plight of the Palestinians has struck a sympathetic chord with all peace-loving peoples. Malaysians have always supported the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in their quest for self-determination and for the establishment of a sovereign, independent State of their own. We sympathize deeply with the Palestinian people in their struggle, through the *intifadah*, for their national rights.

My delegation would like to reiterate its full support for any initiative taken by the Palestinian leaders,

represented by the PLO, to enable the Palestinian people to enjoy their full and legitimate rights and to secure the return of the occupied territories, including Al Quds Al Sharif. We stand ready to work with the PLO and with other countries in reviewing the relevant United Nations resolutions at this session of the General Assembly. We are also hopeful that the PLO and Israel, as well as other Arab States in the Middle East, will build on the initial success of the agreement and continue to strive to bring about a new era of sustained peace, stability and prosperity in the region.

Mr. LI Zhaoxing (China) *(interpretation from Chinese)*: Since the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the situation in the Middle East has undergone major changes. As a result of their concerted efforts, the PLO and Israel have finally recognized each other and signed the agreement on interim self-government in Gaza and Jericho. This is a gratifying outcome to the persistent and protracted struggle waged by the Palestinian people, as well as a wise move by the leaders of the PLO and Israel. It is also a major breakthrough in the Middle East peace process and an important step towards the full restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people and towards the realization of a comprehensive and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East.

We wish to express our appreciation of and our support for all of this. Of course, there is still a long way to go before a comprehensive and fair settlement of the Palestinian question is achieved, and there may still be difficulties and ups and downs in the negotiations. However, we hope that the PLO and Israel will continue their efforts, in a flexible and practical manner, to secure the early realization of peace in the entire Middle East region.

The Palestinian people have fought long and courageously for the restoration of their legitimate national rights and made tremendous efforts for the settlement of the Palestine question. The Chinese Government and people have closely followed developments in the Middle East; they have consistently supported the Palestinian people in their just struggle and actively backed and promoted the efforts of the Arab countries and Israel to settle their disputes through peaceful negotiations. China took an active part in the work of five working groups of the Middle East peace talks and not long ago successfully sponsored in Beijing the fourth meeting of the multilateral working group on water resources in the Middle East.

It is our consistent position that a political solution to the Middle East question should be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions - in particular, on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - that the occupied Arab territories should be returned, and that the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be restored. At the same time, the sovereignty and security of all the countries of the Middle East, including Israel, should be respected and guaranteed. In future, China will, as always, work with other members of the international community, and in particular the Middle East countries, in a continued endeavour to promote the peace process in the Middle East and, to the best of its ability, provide support and assistance to the Palestinian people in their efforts to rebuild their homeland.

We are glad to note that in recent years the United Nations has played an increasingly important role in resolving regional disputes and maintaining world peace. The United Nations has made important contributions to promoting the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the Middle East question as a whole. After the signing of the agreement between the PLO and Israel, the occupied territories will be confronted with the arduous and urgent tasks of reconstruction, and the successful implementation of the agreement will have a direct impact on the Middle East peace process. We are convinced that the United Nations can play a greater role in mobilizing the support of the international community for the successful implementation of the agreement and in enhancing the prospects of a comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine and the realization of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. DUTTA (India): My delegation is happy to speak today, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, to reiterate the wish of the Government and people of India to reaffirm their support for the Palestinian people, who have been struggling for decades for the exercise of their inalienable rights. The signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September has presented the region with a sense of new opportunity. This notable first step taken by the visionary leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel to ensure peace and stability in West Asia signals a possible end to the strife and discord that have disrupted several generations.

My delegation salutes the courage and the spirit of accommodation and optimism which have produced a blueprint for a new *modus vivendi* in the region. These historic Principles, based on the mutual recognition of the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, are an important milestone in the international peace process and lay the foundations for a just and lasting peace in the region. This Assembly has a role to play in guiding this process to its ultimate goal of a peaceful, strifeless and economically developed and dynamic region.

The road to the present juncture has been a long and arduous one. My country has consistently admired the untiring efforts of the Palestinian leader in steering towards the realization of the inalienable rights of their people. We have also witnessed with satisfaction the steps that other States have taken in contributing to peace in the region, and we all look forward to a permanent settlement. My Government has taken a principled stand over the years concerning the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and welcomes the continued pragmatism of the leadership of both sides, which we are confident will make every effort in the search for a lasting solution. It is our earnest hope that all the parties involved in the Middle East peace process will seize this opportunity to advance the cause of peace and achieve a just and comprehensive settlement.

India has historic ties of friendship and socio-cultural links with the peoples of the region. We witness with great pleasure all ongoing measures to introduce an era of regional amity, peace and prosperity for which the people have been waiting. By participating in the multilateral negotiations which form part of the peace process, we will continue to extend our support for further efforts towards peace in the region. We are also ready to extend material and technical assistance to the Palestinian people to consolidate their progress towards self-government.

In this context, we are particularly pleased at the United Nations support for the peace process. Everyone gathered here recognizes that supporting the peace process will require multifaceted assistance to Palestine, particularly in the fields of health, education and the creation of employment.

The need to upgrade the entire infrastructure has been recognized by the United Nations, which has announced programmes and projects whose cost amounts to nearly $250 million. For the first year of the interim period the United Nations proposal is to increase its activities by about 55 per cent. The proposed assistance is in areas over which Palestinians would assume responsibility. The organs proposed to be entrusted with responsibility for carrying out these functions include the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which would employ their respective international staffs. All of us can testify to the excellence and commitment of these organs in their fields of activity.

We must also recognize that it is the duty of us all to work together to remove all discord and dissension in the long disturbed and strife-ridden region, and thus eliminate the genesis of sporadic disturbances of the peace, so that the peace process may become stable, sturdy and vibrant.

While our delegation is confident that the United Nations will help the peace process in West Asia to move forward considerably, the really meaningful impetus for a permanent and lasting solution will have to come from the parties themselves. We are confident that, having made such a pragmatic breakthrough in neutralizing areas of longstanding conflict, Israel and the PLO will together work out a permanent plan for future coexistence. To this extent, the people of our country and our Government extend our best wishes.

I wish to conclude by reiterating our Government's commitment to help the peace process to the best of its capability.

AGENDA ITEM 43 *(continued)*

COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

(a) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/475 and Add.1)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.23/Rev.1)

The PRESIDENT: Members will recall that the Assembly held its debate on agenda item 43 at its 60th meeting, held on 22 November.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/48/L.23/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt that draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/48/L.23/Rev.1 was adopted *(resolution 48/25).*

The PRESIDENT: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 43?

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 8 *(continued)*

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES (A/48/417/Add.1)

The PRESIDENT: The General Assembly will now turn its attention to document A/48/417/Add.1, which contains a letter dated 23 November 1993 addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences.

As members are aware, the Assembly, in paragraph 7 of its resolution 40/243, decided that no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly.

As indicated in the letter I have just mentioned, the Committee on Conferences has recommended that the General Assembly authorize the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme to meet in New York during the forty-eighth session of the Assembly.

Bearing in mind that this date overlaps with the forty-eighth session of the Assembly, may I take it that the General Assembly adopts the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.